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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 001183

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ETRD](#) [MZ](#) [RENAMO](#)

SUBJECT: SCENE-SETTER FOR VISIT OF AFONSO DHLAKAMA TO WASHINGTON

REF: A. MAPUTO 1154

[1](#)B. MAPUTO 1001

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Opposition party RENAMO's presidential candidate Afonso Dhlakama will visit Washington following his attendance at the Republican National Convention. RENAMO party officials consider Dhlakama's visit to Washington key for both the party's and the candidate's credibility. As in past meetings with Embassy officials, Dhlakama will likely be interested in a range of economic and political topics. Key bilateral issues that deserve particular attention include the December general elections, trade and investment, HIV/AIDS, and GRM participation in regional issues. The visit will provide an opportunity to gain a better understanding of Dhlakama's specific policy objectives and campaign strategies, something that has proved difficult in the past. End summary.

THE VISIT

[1](#)2. (U) Dhlakama's trip is being organized and funded by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. His visit follows trips to Washington by ruling party FRELIMO presidential candidate Armando Guebuza and expected third-party PDD presidential candidate Raul Domingos (Ref B). In addition to meetings with AF A/S Newman, NSC Senior Director Courville, and MCC CEO Applegarth, Dhlakama will also speak at a symposium hosted by IRI, discuss Mozambique's investment climate with US businesses, and meet with World Bank and International Monetary Fund officials.

THE CONTEXT OF THE VISIT

[1](#)3. (SBU) On December 1 and 2, Mozambique will hold its third multi-party presidential elections since independence in [1](#)1975. The current president, Joaquim Chissano, will step down after having served since 1986, winning elections in 1994 and [1](#)1999. Chissano and the leadership of FRELIMO dominate policy-making and implementation. US-Mozambican bilateral relations have been excellent under Chissano. Mozambique is the only country in the world to be both a focus country under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and an eligible country for the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA).

[1](#)4. (SBU) During November 2003 municipal elections, FRELIMO won all but 4 of the country's 33 mayorships in what were considered generally free and fair elections. Though formal campaigning for the December elections does not officially begin until October 17, high-level FRELIMO party officials have already hit the campaign trail, focusing particularly on northern and central provinces which are likely to be closely contested. RENAMO officials have been less visible in campaigning, though Dhlakama has been outspoken regarding what he considered a highly flawed voter registration process. Dhlakama has stated that the voter registration process, which recently ended, deliberately under-registered or bypassed voters in traditionally RENAMO supported areas. RENAMO has asked, without success, that the voter registration process be repeated.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Another concern for RENAMO has been the National Electoral Commission's (CNE) decision to allow Mozambicans living abroad, many of whom are considered to be FRELIMO supporters, to register to vote. However, no decision has been taken as to whether Mozambicans living abroad who have registered will in fact be eligible to vote. Recent conflicts between armed RENAMO supporters and the police in the central province of Sofala (Ref A) have highlighted political tensions in the pre-election period. Dhlakama has met with European officials regarding the upcoming presidential elections and has encouraged the participation of international observers. He visited China in late August.

BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

[1](#)6. (SBU) Dhlakama came to prominence in 1976, at the start of the brutal 16-year guerrilla war against FRELIMO. He has been President of RENAMO since 1980. Since the signing of the Rome

Peace Agreement in 1992, Dhlakama has played a crucial role in transforming RENAMO into a viable political party and keeping the disparate factions of his party from lapsing back into violence. Despite his party disputing the outcome of the 1999 presidential elections, Dhlakama grudgingly accepted the results, and RENAMO did not revert to violence to press its case that the FRELIMO victory was fraudulent. He has since reaffirmed his party's acceptance of reconciliation on numerous occasions, such as annual ceremonies involving President Chissano and other FRELIMO officials. In past meetings with Embassy officials, Dhlakama has expressed satisfaction with US engagement in Mozambique. Regarding priorities for the country, he has stressed the need for greater progress on judicial reform and corruption, as well the importance of developing national economic production, particularly in small and medium sized businesses, as a means of reducing the country's reliance on South African imports. If RENAMO wins the elections, a key challenge will be to find technically competent party members to fill key government positions; Dhlakama claims that many competent figures support RENAMO, but will not reveal their loyalties before the election.

KEY ISSUES

17. (SBU) A) Elections: The USG is supporting the electoral process through financial assistance to the Carter Center and domestic observer groups. As we did during the municipal elections, post will send observers to key municipalities throughout the country. Given recent tensions in Sofala province (Ref A) and complaints by RENAMO over the voter registration process, it will be important for USG officials to gain assurances from Dhlakama of his commitment to a fair and non-violent electoral process.

B) Trade & Investment: Mozambique has yet to take full advantage of AGOA, and US trade and investment in Mozambique remains small. Currently, only one apparel company in Mozambique is exporting under AGOA, with a second company expected to begin operations shortly. Mozambique has an opportunity to address a number of the constraints to increased trade and investment. It would be interesting to hear Dhlakama's vision for promoting increased trade and investment as a mechanism for reducing poverty.

C) HIV/AIDS: Dhlakama has not been particularly vocal on HIV/AIDS or donor support to combat the epidemic. USG officials may wish to encourage his active engagement on the issue. Should Dhlakama raise allegations that the USG is pursuing a "unilateralist" approach to combating HIV/AIDS, USG interlocutors can stress that the USG views Mozambique as a full partner in PEPFAR and is making every effort to ensure that our programs complement and support Mozambique's.

D) Regional Issues: During his recently-ended Presidency of the African Union (AU), President Chissano was actively engaged on broader African issues and sought to use his AU Presidency both to build stronger African institutions and to find African-led solutions to Africa's problems. Mozambique's participation in the AU's peace-keeping operations in Burundi is one such example. ACOTA has visited Mozambique twice in the past few months and is planning a Strategy and Planning Conference for mid-September. We look forward to supporting the GRM increase its capacity to contribute to peace-keeping operations and would expect to continue our engagement regardless of the December election outcome. Dhlakama has in the past criticized the reluctance of some key African leaders, such as Mbeki, to take clear positions on regional issues such as the situation in Zimbabwe. We encourage USG officials to reaffirm the importance of Mozambique's continued attention to and participation in regional affairs.

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